

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7759

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 6230

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

FOR BOWDLER (ARA) FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: APER, ASEC, AR

SUBJECT: USMILGP PRESENCE IN ARGENTINA

REF STATE 181120

1. YOU WILL RECALL THAT REDUCTION OF MILGP WAS PART OF AN OVERALL US MISSION PERSONNEL REDUCTION UNDERTAKEN IN MAY AS A RESULT OF OUR ASSESSMENT THAT USG PERSONNEL WERE TEMPTING TARGETS OF TERRORIST GROUPS. REDUCTIONS WERE ACROSS-THE-BOARD WITH EACH SECTION AND AGENCY MAKING PROPORTIONATE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CUT. THE MILGP WAS REDUCED FROM 29 TO 20. THE GENERAL FEELING WAS THAT ANY FURTHER CUTS WOULD BE CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF CHANGES IN THE LEVEL OF THE SECURITY THREAT. THE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE LEVEL OF THREAT IS NOW NOT MARKEDLY DIFFERENT FROM LAST MAY. THEREFORE, I DO NOT AT THIS TIME RECOMMEND A REDUCTION OF THE MILGP BELOW THE PRESENT LEVEL OF 20, IF SECURITY IS THE ONLY CONSIDERATION.

2. APART FROM SECURITY, FURTHER REDUCTION AT THIS TIME WOULD BE VIEWED AS A DELIBERATE LESSENING OF THE CORDIAL RELATIONSHIPS THAT EXIST AT THE WORKING LEVEL BETWEEN THE US MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THE COUNTERPART ARGENTINE SERVICES WITH WHICH THEY COOPERATE. THE DISRUPTIONS OF PROGRAMMED TRAINING STEMMING FROM THE APPLICATION
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OF SECTION 620(A)(3) OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT HAVE

IRRITATED THE HIGHEST LEVEL IN THE ARGENTINE ARMY. THE ARGENTINE AIR FORCE AND NAVY, WHICH HAVE HAD TO MAKE FEWER CHANGES IN THEIR TRAINING PLANS, HAVE BEEN LESS AFFECTED. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS IS THE TIME FOR US TO ADD TO THE BILATERAL PROBLEMS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.

3. OF COURSE, IF THERE SHOULD BE OVERRIDING POLICY NEEDS THAT REQUIRE A LESSENERED US MILITARY PRESENCE IN ARGENTINA, THE WE SHOULD ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF FURTHER CUTS IN THE LIGHT OF SUCH A POLICY CHANGE. BUT, AS I HAVE POINTED OUT, SECURITY HAS BEEN THE ONLY CONSIDERATION AGAINST WHICH CUTS HAVE BEEN MEASURED SO FAR. I, THEREFORE, REITERATE THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE PLANNING TO CUT BELOW THE CURRENT LEVEL OF 20 POSITIONS IN THE MILGP UNLESS SECURITY SITUATION OR POLICY CHANGES WARRANT IT.
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